

## Announcements and Prayer Requests

- 👉 **December WestFed Food Pantry needs:** Cereal, crackers, canned corn.
- 👉 **Evelyn Stedtefeld turns 100** on Jan. 1, New Year's Day. Let's bombard her with cards to wish her well on her birthday. Her address:

Evelyn Stedtefeld  
Ohio Living Llanfair, Room #71  
1701 Llanfair Avenue  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45224

### 👉 Prayers are requested for:

- ♥ Linda Sellins, Thelma Imhoff's daughter, undergoing treatment for cancer.
- ♥ Michael Cranley, a friend of Staci Dennison
- ♥ Sally Harlow, at Hillebrand, recovering from serious health issues.
- ♥ Mary Baverman (Marc's mom) who recently suffered a stroke.
- ♥ Craig Kallendorf, Camille Rechel's brother, who is in hospice.
- ♥ Pierce Teepen, son of Alyssa and Tyler, friends of Rhonda Boddy.
- ♥ Diane Ringshauser, who is undergoing chemotherapy.
- ♥ Rev. Larry Lalama, Jeff's cousin
- ♥ Diana Jackson, Rhonda's sister-in-law, undergoing chemotherapy.
- ♥ Jan Rice and Kristine Von Holle, Sandy Morris' friends with serious health issues
- ♥ DJ Hines, Sandy Morris' brother-in-law.
- ♥ Linda Kugele who continues to deal with breathing issues.
- ♥ Our homebound members and friends.
- ♥ Our Scouting units, their families and leaders.
- ♥ Our Session, our committees, and the discernment team.
- ♥ Our partnership with City Gosel Mission's Princesses Ballet.



**Westwood First Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, OH**

## Gathering Around God's Word

**Prelude:** "Christmas Fantasy Selections"—arr. Diane Bish

*[Please take a moment to silence all mobile devices and prepare for worship.]*

**Welcome and Announcements**

*[\* Where indicated (\*), those who are able are invited to stand.]*

**Ring of the Tower Bell**

**\* Call to Worship** (*based on Isaiah 9:2-7—responsive*)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

**We long for a light to guide us.**

You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy.

**We long for God's joy in our lives.**

For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

**We long to be relieved of all that we carry.**

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**He is named Emmanuel: God with us. In this tiny baby, this vulnerable child, we find our light, our joy, our comfort. Joy to the World! The Lord is come!**

**Opening Prayer**

\* Hymn No. : “Joy to The World”

Joy to the world! The Lord is come: Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the world! The Savior reigns: Let us our songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrow grow nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found, far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness, and wonders of His love,  
And wonders of His love, and wonders, wonders, of His love!

## Proclaiming God’s Word

### Prayer for Illumination

**Gospel Reading:** *Luke 2:1-20—The Birth of Jesus*

<sup>1</sup> In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

<sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

<sup>8</sup> Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. [continued...]

## Moment for Meditation: Christmas

The shopping is done, all the presents are bought and wrapped, the house is clean and the tree with all its decoration is shining brightly. So what has all this hectic busyness been about?

When we have a birthday in our own family, what do we do? We gather around the person whose birthday it is and as a family, then we do two things. We *remember* and we *celebrate*. We remember the time and date the person was born. We look back and remember the day they came in to our family.

We might look at photographs of them and recall how they looked when they were young. We tell stories about them when they were young; we remember their first words, the first days at a school and other significant events in their early life. Then we *celebrate* with them. We give thanks and celebrate the difference they have made and continue to make to our family.

This is exactly what we do on Christmas Day; we *remember* and we *celebrate*. We recall and tell the story of how and when Jesus was born. We tell the story of Mary and Joseph being turned away from the inn, we remember that the angels appeared with good news and we remember how shepherds and the kings visited the stable. Then we celebrate the difference Jesus has made not only to the world, but to our personal lives.

We have to be careful that we don’t look at Christmas as if it were just a historical event that happened in the past. The birth of Jesus is an event that echoes and ripples through the centuries right down to us today. We are asked not to experience Christmas and the birthday of Christ as a nice romantic thing as is often depicted on Christmas cards.



Through the birth of Christ, God enters our time and history, and more importantly each of our own personal lives. Christ is Emmanuel, *God-is-with-us*, and God is with each of us today in a very personal and intimate way. As pope, John Paul II, wrote, “*The mystery of the birth of Jesus that took place over 2000 years ago must be lived today and every day. The Word that found a dwelling place in and through Mary comes to knock on our hearts this Christmas and every Christmas, today and every day.*”

This Christmas, while all the celebrations and festivities are taking place, let’s stop, take some time and ask ourselves, what am I *remembering*? What am I *celebrating*?

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~ Michael Moore OMI



*The Nativity, by He Qi*



*In The City of David, by Jorge Cocco Santangelo*

<sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

<sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, <sup>19</sup> and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

<sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

**Sermon:** “*I Am—With Us*”



## Responding to God’s Word

\* **Carol: No. 27:** “*Gentle Mary Laid Her Child*”

Gentle Mary laid her Child lowly in a manger;  
There He lay, the undefiled, to the world a stranger:  
Such a Babe in such a place, can He be the Savior?  
Ask the saved of all the race who have found His favor.

Angels sang about His birth; wise men sought and found Him;  
Heaven’s star shone brightly forth, glory all around Him:  
Shepherds saw the wondrous sight, heard the angels singing;  
All the plains were lit that night, all the hills were ringing.

Gentle Mary laid her Child lowly in a manger;  
He is still the undefiled, but no more a stranger:  
Son of God, of humble birth, beautiful the story;  
Praise His name in all the earth, Hail the King of glory!

\* **Carol: No. 28:** “*Good Christian Friends, Rejoice*”

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
Give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today.  
Ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.  
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
Now ye hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!  
He hath opened heaven's door, and we are blest forevermore.  
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
Now ye need not fear the grave: Jesus Christ was born to save!  
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.  
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

**Affirmation of Faith for Christmas** (by Nathan Nettleton—unison)

**We believe in God, the creator and giver of life, who brought all creation to birth, who mothers us and fathers us, protecting, nurturing, and cherishing us. We believe in Jesus Christ: God born among us as a fragile baby, embodying both love, and the need for love, and calling us to rest in God as trustingly as a tiny child. We believe in the Holy Spirit, breathed into us at our birth, always drawing us on to be born again, encouraging, exhorting, comforting, nourishing our growth and inspiring our living. We believe in the reconciliation of the world to God, through Christ. Hunted at birth, and humiliated at death, Christ entered our fearful darkness, so that we might enter his glorious light and share the life of his resurrection. And we believe that each new child is a glimpse of the face of God, a sign of the life to come, and a call to live in peace, and celebrate living together. Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth. Amen.**

**Invitation to Stewardship and Offertory Prayer** (unison)

Holy One, as we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child, we seek to honor you with our tithes and offerings. We know that everything in this world is a gift from you, O God, so we humbly return a generous portion of these gifts to you. We pray that these gifts may help this church to change people's lives and to spread your message of salvation. In the name of the Babe lying in the manger, we pray. Amen.

**Offertory Solo:** “*What Child Is This?*”—arr. Kevin Costley  
Erin Olakanmi, piano

**Christmas Prayer for Advent and The Lord's Prayer** (unison)

[During the prayer, everyone will have an opportunity to offer a joy or concern aloud. During the pause, feel free to call out the name of someone for whom prayer is requested, or briefly, a joy or concern on your heart. The prayer concludes with the Lord's Prayer.]

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us—not into temptation—but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

## **Bearing God's Word Into the World**

\* **Closing Carol No. 29:** “*Go, Tell It On the Mountain*”

*Refrain:* Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and everywhere;  
Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,  
Behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. [Refrain]

The shepherds feared and trembled when lo! above the earth  
Rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. [Refrain]

Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,  
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. [Refrain]

**Charge and Benediction**

**Postlude:** “*Christmas Fantasy Selections*”—Diane Bish



## **Leading Worship This Morning**

Rev. Dr. Jeff Colarossi, *Pastor*

Heather MacPhail, *Organist/Director of Music Ministries*

Jason Dennison, *Videographer/Director of Technology*

Jane Colarossi, *Lay Worship Leader*